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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION KUWAIT MAY 22-24: RAFAH INCURSION;
CHALABI; ABU GHRAIB; MEPI AND GMEI.

1. SUMMARY: The coincidence of the Israeli operation in Rafah with alleged American bombing of a wedding party in Iraq leads a prominent conservative commentator to cite both as examples of "Arab blood being cheap." The first court martial trial to come out of the abuses at Abu Ghraib was dealt with in an even-handed fashion by one writer, faulting the lack of higher accountability for the acts but also commending the trial as a "boost to Iraq's grasp on democracy." The raid on Ahmed Chalabi's offices was characterized in one editorial as "America selling-out its collaborator." END SUMMARY.

2. "Arab Blood Is Cheap"

Dr. Abdel Muhsin Yousef Jamal wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/22): "Whether in Iraq or Palestine, Arab blood has become cheap. In one day more than twenty Palestinians were killed in Rafah while trying to resist Israeli tyranny. On the same day, forty-one Iraqis were killed when American aircraft shelled an Iraqi village during a wedding celebration. Arab nations are weak, and disunity rules among the Arabs. Nevertheless, hope rises from the Arab youth, and resistance is in itself victory."

3. "Collaborators"

Mohammed Yousef Al-Mulaifi wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/23): "It seems America has reached another low, contemptibly selling-out her collaborators. Chalabi was America's own soldier. He was recruited, received millions of dollars for his party, and eventually installed by the Americans in the Governing Council. However, Chalabi was finally humiliated when America set loose the Iraqi police upon him. Not only did they wreak havoc at his residence, they also humiliated him. Chalabi got a taste of what it is to be an American collaborator."

4. "Show-Court"

Fawzia Salem Al-Sabah wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (5/23): "Recently, a U.S. military court convicted the first U.S. soldier for abusing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison. He received a one-year sentence and dismissal from the army. The trial was no more than a show targeted to improve the image of the United States vis--vis human rights. The trial consisted of some negative elements, such as: 1) no American soldier was tried before the pictures scandal was exposed; 2) no high-ranking American military personnel, who were supervising the interrogations and torture, were convicted; 3) the trial was quasi-public, and no human rights organizations were allowed to visit victims' families, and 4) the trial was not aimed at getting justice for the victims. However, a few positive elements emerged: 1) the trial boosted the role of the press as an unofficial superintendent over authority; 2) the trial is a lesson to soldiers, and a deterrence, and 3) the trial will help boost Iraq's grasp of democracy, and place a nucleus for a new democratic state in Iraq."

5. "For The Better"

Dr. Ayed Al-Mana'a wrote in independent Al-Watan (5/24): "In order to reduce the negative publicity of the violations of Iraqi prisoners' rights at Abu Ghraib, it is not enough to offer monetary compensation to those abused. Rather, for the U.S. to preserve its reputation, it should free the Guantanamo detainees, especially those who have not been convicted of any crime, and return them to their countries. Should this take place, the image of the United States would improve greatly."

6. "Kuwaiti `Marines'"

Dr. Sami Naser Khalifa wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-A'am (5/22): "[S]ome Kuwaiti officials fully endorse America's foreign policy agenda, despite the fact that such policies contradict our national interests. The American administration's audacious interference in our domestic affairs, such as demands that we implement the GMEI or the Middle East Partnership Initiative, or even through the dictates of the American and British ambassadors, whose opinions have become binding to many Kuwaiti officials, has become more than obvious. Some [Kuwaiti] journalists have

no other task but to improve the ugly image of the American administration, and to justify American interference in the domestic affairs of our region. My colleague was correct to call them the 'Undercover [American] Marines.' Despite their small numbers, they are doing a great service for the American administration, and are exploiting the silence of the majority of Kuwaitis. They are also grasping at the only good deed that George Bush, Sr. accomplished, more than twelve years ago: the liberation of Kuwait."

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